

NOTES ON SOME AUSTRALIAN SNAKES.

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Several species of Australian snakes are confined, or almost confined, in distribution to the State of Queensland. Little has been recorded about most of these forms.

The collections of the Queensland Museum have expanded considerably in recent years, and many specimens have been added of species formerly scarce in collections. Notes on four of these are provided.

DENISONIA DAMELII (Gunther).

Hoplocephalus damelii Gunther, Journ. Mus. Godeffroy, 12, 1876, p. 46.

RANGE IN QUEENSLAND.—From about Rockhampton, mid-east Queensland, south to the vicinity of the Queensland-New South Wales border, and west within these limits for approximately 200 miles.

SPECIMENS EXAMINED.—9 from the following localities. Rockhampton, mid-east Queensland; Oakey, Jandowae, Warra, Dalby, Darling Downs District of south-east Queensland; Forest Hill, south-east Queensland.

SCALE COUNT.—Scales always in 17 rows; ventrals 148–162; anal divided; subcaudals 31–44 single.

Maximum length of specimens in the collections is 578 mm.

Colour pattern shows little variation. The dorsal surface is dark olive grey or brown, the head darker or black. Ventral surface either cream or cream spotted with grey. In one specimen the hind edges of the ventral scales are grey, and in another, there is an irregular grey stripe in the centre of the ventral surface.

A specimen from Forest Hill, south-east Queensland, has a small, irregular, sub-triangular shield between the frontal and prefrontals. Another example from Warra, Darling Downs, south-east Queensland, has an irregular frontal with an angular bend on each lateral margin.

The only specimen recorded outside the range given is an example collected at Mount Harris, 30 miles north-west of Nyngan, central New South Wales, Kinghorn (1942, p. 120).

PSEUDECHIS COLLETTI Boulenger.

Pseudechis colletti Boulenger, Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist., ser. 7, 10, 1902, p. 494.

RANGE.—Western Queensland, extending from Julia Creek in the north-west to Hughenden, and south to Charleville.

SPECIMENS EXAMINED.—17 from the following localities. Julia Creek, Maxwellton, north-west Queensland; Richmond, Hughenden, Telemon Station, 30 miles north-west of Hughenden, central north Queensland; Aramac, Whitewood, Barcardine, Longreach, Dartmouth, central Queensland; Charleville, south Queensland.

SCALE COUNT.—Scales always in 19 rows; ventrals 218–230; anal divided; subcaudals 57–64, majority single, the last 1–14 paired.

Maximum length of specimens in the collections is 1898 mm.

The colour of *Pseudechis colletti* shows considerable variation. The dorsal surface may be medium brown, pink or red, with irregular broad, dark brown or black bands. Many of the lighter scales are dark tipped. The head and neck are dark brown dorsally with a median stripe of lighter colour about one scale wide extending for ten scales along the neck. The ventral surface may be cream, pink or bright red, the scales edged or blotched with dark grey. A damaged specimen received from Dartmouth, central Queensland, is predominantly bright red in colour, and this colour has been retained although the specimen is preserved in spirit.

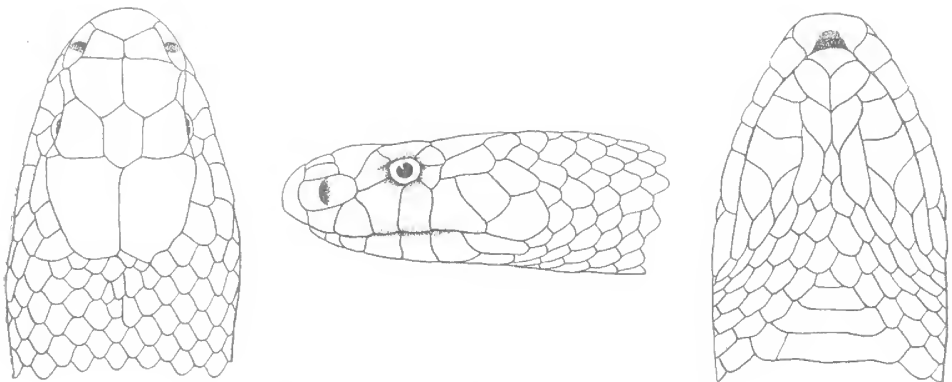


Figure 1.—Head of *Pseudechis colletti* Boulenger. Natural size.

Boulenger described the frontal as not longer than the prefrontals, but in all specimens examined, the frontal shield varies from just slightly to one and one third times longer than the prefrontals.

Specimens of *Pseudechis colletti* have previously been scarce in collections and little information has been recorded. For many years this species was believed to attain a length of about three feet (900 mm.), but specimens in the collections measure from 965 mm. to 1898 mm. The latter measurement is the length of a specimen received alive from Central Queensland in 1953. It was subsequently photographed and cast for display purposes.

Other specimens of *P. colletti* were recently recorded by Mackay (1955, p. 20).

DEMANSIA GUTTATA Parker.

Demansia guttata Parker, Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist., ser. 9, 17, 1926, p. 668.

RANGE.—A restricted area of western Queensland, from Julia Creek in the north-west to Quilpie in the south.

SPECIMENS EXAMINED.—20 from the following localities. Julia Creek, Maxwellton, north-west Queensland; Corfield, Longreach, Stonehenge, Isisford, central Queensland; Quilpie, south Queensland.

SCALE COUNT.—Scales in 21 rows; ventrals 191–213; anal divided; subcaudals 51–58 pairs, (in one specimen 13 single and 42 pairs).

Maximum length of specimens in the collections is 1244 mm.

In some specimens the colour of the dorsal surface varies from pale brown to reddish tan, often with thirteen large, dark brown blotches, two of which are on the tail. Others are irregularly flecked with dark brown, generally with only one dark blotch behind the head. The colour of the ventral surface varies from uniform cream or light brown to bright orange-pink.

Kinghorn (1931, p. 86) figured a specimen in the collections of the National Museum, Melbourne, which had only 19 rows of scales. It was collected at Avon Downs, mid-east Queensland (approximately 140 miles from the coast), a locality far to the east of the range of all other specimens collected.

DEMANSIA NUCHALIS (Gunther).

Pseudonaja nuchalis Gunther, Cat. Colubr. Snakes Brit. Mus., 1858, p. 227.

Diemenia carinata Longman, Mem. Qld. Mus., 3, 1915, p. 31.

RANGE IN QUEENSLAND.—Throughout the State.

SPECIMENS EXAMINED.—40 from the following localities. Stannary Hills, Charters Towers, north-east Queensland; Carl Creek, Julia Creek, north-west Queensland; Longreach, Barcaldine, Jericho, Jundah, Yaraka, central Queensland; Adavale, Quilpie, Birdsville, south-west Queensland; Charleville, Wyandra, Cunnamulla, Sunnybrae, Yuleba, St. George, Gradule, south Queensland; Eidsvold, Kingaroy, Pittsworth, Stradbroke Island, south-east Queensland.

SCALE COUNT.—Scales always in 17 rows; ventrals 162–222; anal divided; subcaudals 37–61 pairs.

Maximum length of specimens in the collections is 1689 mm.

It is clear from an examination of forty specimens, including the type and ten others previously identified as *carinata*, that *Diemenia carinata* Longman is conspecific with *Demansia nuchalis* (Gunth.). The main character cited by Longman when describing his species was that “this snake has the remarkable keeled ventral scales of *Hoplocephalus stephensi* and *bitorquatus*.” This is incorrect. In the genus *Hoplocephalus* the ventrals are angulate and notched laterally. In the type of *carinata*, the ventrals are angulate, but they are not notched. The type is preserved in a partly collapsed condition.

In his description of *Demansia nuchalis*, Gunther stated that the belly is flat, and while this character is present in all specimens examined, the extent of the flattening, and consequently the angle of the keel produced at each side of the ventral scales, are not constant. In the majority of specimens the ventrals are conspicuously keeled, while in a few, the keeling is just evident. This variation was noted by Thomson (1935, p. 729).

The condition of the nasal shields is variable. In the majority of specimens the nasal is completely divided; in one, both nasals are semi-divided; in another, there is one divided and one entire nasal; while in the type of *carinata*, the left nasal is entire but notched below, and the right nasal is completely divided. Longman gave both nasals as entire but notched below.

The colour of the larger specimens is light to medium brown or tan on the dorsal surface, with darker flecks, sometimes forming narrow, irregular bands, or with ten to fifteen broad, dark blotches, the last three on the tail. In the latter, there may be three narrow bands about one scale wide between the darker blotches. The head and neck are usually dark brown, but in a specimen examined from Charters Towers, north-east Queensland (not in collections), this area was black, and the colour extended for fifteen scales behind the neck and on to the edges of the ventrals. Ventrals cream, or cream with grey, brown or pink spots. In one specimen, the ventrals are cream edged with brown.

Juvenile examples up to about 450 mm. in length have dark patches on the head and neck ; remainder of the dorsal surface light brown, speckled with dark brown or with two to eight narrow, dark bands on the body, and one to three on the tail ; ventral surface uniform cream, or cream spotted with grey or brown.

LITERATURE CITED.

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